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Errors commonly made in mimicry pattern drills are identified, and suggestions made for the proper use of drills. The need for distinct gestures by the teacher to secure response, feedback of correct response, and retracing is emphasized. A step-by-step breakdown of the drill is offered as a model. (AF)

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"Pitfalls of Pattern Practice," An Exegesis

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IT HAPPENED in Thailand, according to Peggy Swallows, a Peace Corps volunteer teaching English in that country.

Teacher: This is a chair.
Chorus of students: This is a chair.
Teacher: Mango.
Students: This is a mango.
Teacher: Table.
Students: This is a table.
Teacher: That.
Students: This is a that.
Teacher: No, think please!
Student A: This is a think please.
Teacher: No, a thousand times no! (Pause)
Very bright student: That is a table.
Teacher: Ah! Correct. . . . Eye.
Student B: I is a table.
Student C: I am a table.
(Exit teacher)

Lately the FL teaching profession has been treated to the above "joke" in various publications. Since we cannot believe that the Peace Corps would give improper training to its teaching volunteers or that Miss Swallows failed to do her homework, we can only conclude that this story was fabricated whole cloth by the OKP (Old Key Party) and is but another piece of their diabolical counter-revolutionary propaganda and must, therefore, be exposed as such. The propagandists of the OKP would, of course, want us to believe that the concept of the pattern drill and with it the entire New Key movement is at fault and caused Miss Swallows' lamentable exit. Nothing could be farther from the truth. If Miss Swallows' students did not learn much that day, it is simply that she did not know how to teach a pattern drill. Her mistakes in procedure were many: 1. She did not model the utterances she expected her students to create. 2. She did not "feed back" the correct responses for confirmation or correction. 3. She did not "retrace" in order to insure learning by the "less bright ones." 4. And, when due to her poor teaching, errors kept building up, she lost her temper and blamed her students for the very mistakes she had invited them to make. Her frustrated cry, "No, think please!" is but evidence that she labored under the mistaken notion that language, like mathematics, is a logical system in which learners can be expected to improvise the correct forms without having first acquired firm control of the model patterns that go into the making of the yet unlearned utterances. As a result, the students' improvisation was chaotic; teacher and students became exasperated; the students were made to feel stupid. In short, despite well organized materials, the class turned into the maximization of errors in the minimum of time. Small wonder that more and more students declare that they would rather learn with good materials from a machine than from a poor teacher. At least, when a pattern drill is presented by a tape recorder, the machine models every frame, confirms the correct response at every step, permits the student to proceed at his own rate of learning, gives him a chance to retrace his steps if he has failed to perform correctly the first time, and displays more patience than many teachers.

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So much for Miss Swallows' methods. Let us turn to the more positive task of discussing procedures that would have made the class a success. In the text from which she was teaching, the pattern drill probably appeared in the following form (except for the letters we have added to facilitate reference):

A This is a chair	AA This is a chair
B _____ mango	BB This is a mango
C _____ table	CC This is a table
D That _____	DD That is a table
E _____ eye	EE That is an eye

When using a pattern drill as a vehicle for teaching mastery of grammatical structures, the teacher can elicit two types of oral production from his students: they either imitate the model said by the teacher or they react verbally to a stimulus enunciated by the teacher and in reacting, create the new and different grammatical structure requested of them. The first type of practice is called Listen-and-Echo, the latter Listen-and-Respond. The difference between the two is crucial to an understanding and application of the New Key method for it disclaims the often-heard OKP statement that in an audio-lingual class the students do nothing but "parrot." To be sure, when the student echoes he parrots. But this activity is merely a stepping stone in the cumulative learning process intended to make the student perceive the new sounds and forms before he is asked to create them himself. A longer period of time is spent in Listen-and-Respond practice by means of a variety of exercises, such as pattern drills or directed dialog, in which the student is challenged to the utmost of his mental and verbal abilities to create the language on his own without the help of an immediately preceding model. Every Listen-and-Respond exercise is a series of self-tests which are, however, not designed to test, but to teach. For example, we could recommend the following pattern drill in which the student is challenged to begin each utterance with "It'd be nice if . . . " to many speakers of English as first language in our high schools:

Stimulus	*Correct Response*
They come along.	It'd be nice, if they came along.
It rains.	It'd be nice, if it rained.
We'll see you soon.	It'd be nice, if we saw you soon.

Two Distinct Gestures

The teacher needs two distinct gestures to elicit either an echo or a response from the students. Developing Patricia O'Connor's concept of the FL teacher as an "orchestra conductor,"[1] we see him directing his symphony orchestra in the production of the music of the language by a continual interplay of symphonic (the entire class) and solo (individual students) echoes and responses. Like a good conductor, the teacher will strive for the maximum of correct performance since a faulty structure or an imperfect sound produced by the students is as offensive to the ear as a wrong note in a concerto. Like a professional orchestra leader, the language teacher must have mastered his "score," that is the programmed text, which he is interpreting. Indeed, he may even prefer a music stand to the traditional desk, not only to remind himself of the close similarity of learning a language to learning music, but also to leave his hands free for directing his players. His hands are his baton. For a group echo he might raise both hands, palms toward him; for a group response, he might extend both hands, index fingers pointing to the class. For individual echo or response he will use the same gestures executed with a single hand toward one student. It matters little what gestures a teacher uses as long as the two signals for echoing and responding are clearly distinguishable from each other and are consistent.

Despite her many errors, Miss Swallows proceeded correctly by not calling her students by name. For an efficient performance the students must have their eyes riveted on the conductor, poised to react instantaneously whenever beckoned. If the students can rely on hearing their names as a cue to action, their minds and eyes may wander instead of being kept on the qui vive. Indeed, one of the secrets of success of the New Key teaching is the silent participation of all students whether they are called on or not. In a good audio-lingual class the students are mouthing the responses to the teacher's

[1] Patricia O'Connor, *Modern Foreign Language in High* School, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1960, p. 5. See also Evangeline M. Galas, "The Foreign Language Teacher as Choral Director. Suggestions on the Use of Gestures," *Hispania*, (Vol. XLIV (Dec. 1962), pp. 787–789.

stimulus even when not called upon. In fact, it is often difficult to keep them from "blurting out" the response they have on the tip of their tongues. Silent participation or round-the-hour attention can be even further assured, if the teacher, after giving a stimulus, signals to one student but looks in another direction. It is up to each drummer, cellist or harpist to watch for the signal that will cue him in, each in his turn.

Feedback of Correct Response

Pattern drills are an application of the principles of programmed learning: the material is broken into small steps—called frames—, each deliberately building on the previous one; at every step that the student takes he must actively respond to the stimulus; and as soon as he has attempted to give the correct response he is given immediately the correct response for confirmation or correction. If he was in error he must echo the correct response. When practicing with a tape the correct response is always recorded—but in class the *teacher* must provide it. Since the teacher now no longer says "Very good" or "No, a thousand times no!" as our Miss Swallows, the student must perk up his ears to find out whether he was right or wrong, thus drawing him into a continuous process of auditory self-evaluation. Moreover, by feeding back the correct response after every student response, and calling for a group echo if an error was made, the teacher's more authentic speech always supersedes the student's speech as the standard of achievement. This is particularly important in a Replacement Drill where the correct response to each frame becomes in turn the basis for the stimulus of the next frame.

With these principles in mind, we are now ready to describe the steps Miss Swallows might have taken in order to create an optimum learning situation. The following terms will be used:

Teacher signals for group echo: With both hands extended, palms facing him, teacher signals for entire class to imitate what he has said.

Teacher signals for individual echo: With one hand extended, palm toward him, teacher signals to one student (while preferably looking in another direction), to imitate what he has said.

Teacher signals for group response: With both hands pointing toward class, index fingers extended, teacher signals for entire class to create the utterance requested.

Teacher signals for individual response: With one hand pointing toward one student (preferably while looking in another direction), index finger extended, teacher signals to this student to create the utterance requested.

Teacher models: Teacher presents utterance in natural speech, with appropriate kinesics,[2] while students listen in order to perceive the sounds and forms of the utterance.

Teacher feeds back correct response: Teacher models the correct response and, if an error was made, signals for group echo of the correct response. Appropriate kinesics accompany the feedback of each correct response.

Three additional points should be kept in mind. 1. Stimulus-response exercises are not fill-in or completion exercises. The student always responds with the complete utterance and never with any of its fragments. This is particularly important in languages where liaison communicates meaning, such as, for example, in a drill on the verb *aimer*. To the stimulus *ils*,[3] the student would not respond with "*aiment aller au cinéma*" but "*ils aiment aller au cinéma*." 2. The next point concerns the timing of the hand signals. They should always be given *after* the teacher has given the stimulus for responding or the model for echoing. 3. Lastly, the teacher should never speak *with* the students as they respond or echo.

Steps to Insure Learning

Here, then, are the steps Miss Swallows might have followed to insure learning:

1. Teacher models Frame AA several times.
2. Teacher signals for group echo. Students echo Frame AA.
3. Teacher gives stimulus of Frame A (*chair*) and signals for group response. Class responds with Frame AA. Teacher feeds back correct response AA.
4. Teacher models Frame BB, and signals for group echo. Class echoes BB.

[2] Kinesics: body motions that play a part in communication, such as raised eyebrows, shoulder shrugs, changes in stance.

[3] Two raised fingers would indicate to the student that the plural is wanted.

5. Teacher gives stimulus of Frame B (*mango*) and signals for group response. Teacher feeds back correct response BB.
6. Teacher models "base-frame" A and signals for group echo.
7. Teacher gives stimulus B (*mango*) and signals for individual response to a *good* student. Individual student responds with BB. Teacher feeds back correct response BB.
8. Teacher models Frame CC and signals for group echo. Class echoes CC.
9. Teacher gives stimulus C (*table*) and signals for group response. Class responds with CC. Teacher feeds back correct response CC.
10. Teacher models "base-frame" A and signals for group echo.
11. Teacher gives stimulus B (*mango*) and signals for individual response to an *average* student. Student responds with BB but pronunciation is faulty. Teacher feeds back correct response BB and signals for group echo.
12. Teacher gives stimulus C (*table*) and signals for individual response to a *good* student. Teacher feeds back correct response CC.
13. Teacher models Frame DD and signals for group echo. Class echoes DD.
14. Teacher gives stimulus D (*that*) and signals for group response. Class responds with DD. Teacher feeds back correct response DD.
15. Teacher models Frame A and signals for group echo. Class echoes AA.
16. Teacher gives stimulus B (*mango*) and signals for individual response to a *slow* student. Student responds with BB. Teacher feeds back correct response BB.
17. Teacher gives stimulus C (*table*) and signals for individual response to an *average* student. Student responds with CC. Teacher feeds back correct response CC.
18. Teacher gives stimulus D (*that*) and signals for individual response from a *good* student. Student fumbles. Teacher immediately models correct response DD and again gives stimulus D to the same student. Student responds with DD. Teacher feeds back correct response.
19. Teacher models Frame EE and signals for group echo. Class echoes EE.
20. Teacher gives stimulus E (*eye*) and signals for group response. Class responds with EE. Teacher feeds back correct response. Teacher asks in English "What does 'That is an eye' mean"? and signals to a student to give the meaning in Thai. This serves to verify that students know at all times what they are saying.
21. Teacher models Frame AA and signals for group echo. Class echoes AA.
22. Teacher gives stimulus B (*mango*) and signals for a volunteer to respond. Volunteer responds with BB. Teacher feeds back correct response BB.
23. Teacher gives stimulus C (*table*) and signals for individual response to a *slow* student. Student responds with CC after some hesitation. Teacher feeds back correct response CC and signals for group echo.
24. Teacher gives stimulus D (*that*) and signals for individual response to *average* student. Student responds with DD. Teacher feeds back correct response.
25. Teacher gives stimulus E (*eye*) and signals for individual response to a *good* student. Student responds with faulty structure. Teacher feeds back correct response EE and signals for group echo. Class echoes EE. Teacher gives stimulus E (*eye*) to another student and signals for individual response. Student responds with EE. Teacher feeds back correct response.
26. Teacher models Frame A. Does *not* call for group or individual echo.
27. Teacher gives stimulus B (*mango*). Signals for volunteer to respond. Teacher feeds back correct response BB.
28. Teacher gives stimulus C. Signals for volunteer to respond. Teacher feeds back correct response CC.
29. Teacher gives stimulus D (*that*). Signals for volunteer to respond. Teacher feeds back correct response DD, and since student's pronunciation was not clear, teacher signals for group echo of DD.
30. Teacher gives stimulus E (*eye*). Signals

for volunteer to respond. Teacher feeds back correct response EE.

Retracing

At 6. the teacher began "retracing," that is, before presenting a new frame he called for a response (from the slower students) on each of the previous frames to insure that every one is given a chance to learn. The retracing occurred at 6, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30. Since this drill employs the replacement technique, the teacher had to model the "base frame" A (see 6, 10, 15, 21, 26) every time he began retracing lest the student would say "This is a that" as happened to Miss Swallows. In a substitution, transformation, combination, question-and-answer, or expansion drill this would not be necessary. On the third or fourth round of retracing, the teacher would work only with those frames that caused special difficulty to the average or slower students.

The written home assignment (assuming that this drill took place in the post-reading period), would follow the same principles of "stimulus—response—immediate confirmation or correction." First the student would copy the frames AA, BB, CC, DD, EE while saying them aloud. Then he would take a piece of paper (called a mask in programmed learning) and cover up the right hand column. Looking in turn at each stimulus in the left hand column he would try to re-create each corresponding correct response in writing. As he wrote each frame, he would uncover the correct response by moving the mask frame by frame and immediately make all necessary corrections. Thus reading and writing reinforces oral mastery in proper sequence.

Mimicry and Mutation Drills

Our exegesis would not be complete without pointing out that for their nefarious work the OKP propagandists have cunningly selected a "mimicry pattern drill" rather than a "mutation pattern drill" in order to delude the public with the canard that the New Key is nothing but a parrot method. Surely, in the mimicry pattern drill that we have before us, the student merely joins together two utterances that still ring in his ears. The teacher says "mango" and the student adds it to "This is a." The New Key program limits the use of such simple drills and insures that the bulk of the exercises are mutation drills in which the student is challenged to create a new and different utterance at every frame by making all necessary grammatical correlations. Our drill would, for example, become a mutation drill, if the student were given the stimulus "mangos" and he had to come up with "These are mangos." Clever as their handiwork may be, the OKP have nevertheless revealed their own ignorance by not even being able to construct a drill that could fool the NKP into taking it for an authentic document. They blundered by constructing a vocabulary- rather than a structure-oriented drill ("This is a mango" or "*Voici la plume de ma tante*"); by combining in one drill replacement with substitution techniques in offering *mango* and *table* as sequential stimuli in terminal position, and lastly, by switching suddenly, after four mimicry frames, to a single mutation frame in which the student has to transform *a* into *an*. Much more could be said to demolish this sly piece of OKP propaganda. But it would be foolish at this time to play into their hands by revealing more of our own strategy and tactics. We eagerly look forward to seeing the OKP again unmasked by their own hands.